(c) Disciplinary proceedings against 9 officials have been initiated and 15 officials including two Gazetted Officers have been given warning.

Overacharing by PCOs

1437. SHRI KULDIP NAYYAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that PCOs in Delhi charge Rs. 2/- per call instead of Rs. 1.50 p allowed by the Department;

(b) whether any checking has been done so far; and

(c) if so, whether any action has been taken against those PCO's who overcharge?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

Reduction of rental and registration fee for rural telephone subscribers

1438. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has reduced the registration fee as well as rentals for rural telephones subscribers;

(b) if so, the details of reduction; and

(c) whether similar reduction is contemplated to be allowed for urban subscribers also?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) Due to redefinition of local area with effect from 15.8.98 (which gave certain advantages to consumers), there was however, a consequential increase in rental and registration charges in case of some subscribers from a lower slab to a higher slab. As it resulted in financial burden on rural subscribers, it has been decided to restore the rentals and registration charges as applicable prior to 15.8.98 in respect of rural subscribers only.

(c) There is no such proposal.

Priorities laid down for utilisation of funds raised through Resurgent India Bonds

1439. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reviewed the position regarding utilisation of funds mobilised under Resurgent India Bonds (RIB) Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof as per guidelines laid down;

(c) what are observations of the Standing Committee on Finance in the matter; and

(d) the details of reaction of Government thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) While giving approval for exchange rist guarantee for Resurgent India Bonds. it was stipulated that 40% of the total rupee equivalent of the resources raised shall be invested by the State Bank of India in Government securities and the remaining amount will be utilised substantially for supporting the financial needs of the Infrastructure Sector. This will be reviewed once in a year.

(c) and (d) This matter has not been referred to or considered by the Standing Committee on Finance.

Review of performance of Oleopine Resin, Turpentine and Camphor industry

1440. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have reviewed the performance of Oleopine Resin, processing Gum Rosin, Turpentine and Camphor industry for last three years;

(b) the details of perfomrance reviewed by standard parameters;

(c) whether the Government have received representations from the industry, trade associations, and MP's about the crisis and critical position of domestic industry; and

(d) if so, the details of major problems highlighted and details of action taken thereon, particularly abolition of import duty on Oleopine resin which is in acute short supply and excise relief on Camphor widely used item by rural and urban poor for pooja purposes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M. R. JANARTHANAN): (a) No formal review of the performance of Oleopine Resin, processing Gum Rosin, Turpentine and Camphor industry for last three years has been undertaken by the Government.

(b) Does not arise in light of (a) above.

(c) and (d) Several representations have been received from trade associations and MP's seeking abolition of import duty on Oleopine Resin (OPR) on the grounds that domestic supply is not adequate. Representations have also been received for exempting Camphor from excise duty. While it was not found feasible to fully exempt OPR from import duty, the excise duty on camphor has been reduced from 18% to 16% with effect from 28.2.1999.

Finance Ministry's approval for setting up of Power Trading Corporation

1441. SHRI RAMJILAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has agreed for the setting up of Power Trading Corporation (PTC) by the Ministry of Power;

(b) if so, the source of its funding and liabilities in case SEBs do not pay on time or go in huge arrears as at present;

(c) whether it amounts to paying the independent power producer at the cost of exchequer;

(d) in what manner the PTC will recover its SEB overdues from the MOP/MOF and whether this issue has been discussed with the Finance Commission; and

(e) whether it will amount to creating another potentially sick unit and damange the health of exsiting units by draining out their investment for a foreign investor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Government, under the revised policy for the setting up of multi-state mega projects has decided to set up a Power Trading Corporation (PTC) which would purchase power from the identified mega projects in the private sector and sell it to the concerned beneficiary state.

(b) The PTC is proposed to be set up with majority equity holding by NTPC, Power Grid, PFC and some other financial institutions. The concerned State Governments/State Electricity Boards (SEB), may also be co-opted if found feasible. Security to the PTC would be provided by means of a Letter of Credit and recourse to the State's share of Central Plan Allocations and other devolutions, in case of default.

(c) The PTC is committed to pay the developers of the mega projects for the power purchased and the beneficiary State/SEB will be similary committed to